

and a stampede of mules breaking my tent ropes, forbade sleep. It was hot when we started the next morning, still following up the Ardal valley and the Karun to Kaj, a village on bare hummocks of gravel alongside of the Karun, a most unpromising-looking place, but higher up in a lateral valley there was a spring and a walled orchard, full of luxuriant greenery, where we camped under difficulties, for the only entrance was by a little stream, leading to a low hole with a door of stone, such as the Afghans use for security, and through which the baggage could not be carried. The tents had to be thrown over the wall. There was little peace, for numbers of the Kaj men sat in rows steadily staring, and there were crowds of people for medicine, ushered in by the *ketchuda*.

Four miles above Ardal is a most picturesque scene, which, though I had ridden to it before, I appreciated far more on a second visit. This is the magnificent gorge of the Tang-i-Darkash Warkash, a gigantic gash or rift in the great range which bounds the Ardal and Kaj valleys on the north, and through which the river, on whose lawn-like margin, the camps were pitched at Shamsabad, find its way to the Karun. A stone bridge of a single arch of wide span is thrown across the stream at its exit from the mountains. Above the bridge are great masses of naked rock, rising into tremendous precipices above the compressed water, with roses and vines hanging out

of their clefts.

Below, the river suddenly expands, and there is a small village, now deserted, with orchards and wheat-fields in the depression in which the Darkash Warkash finds its way across the Kaj valley, a region so sheltered from the fierce sweep of the east wind, and so desirable in other respects, that it bears the name of Bihishtabad, the *Mansion of Heaven*.